

April 28, 2015

Senators of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jay Maddock, executive director of the Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center and a proud resident of Kalamazoo, Mi. I'm also a concerned Michigander. I urge you to vote no on SB4. This broadly written legislation is harmful to families, businesses, and to Michigan.

I think we can all agree that the freedom of religion is an important American value, and an important Michigan value. Which is why I'm thankful that the most powerful document, the US Constitution protects our religious freedoms in the first amendment. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." There also already exists a federal RFRA that supports our freedom of religion. Additionally, our state constitution also protects our freedom of religion. That said it is important for us to recognize where our rights end and where another person's rights begin. We should all have the right to practice our beliefs, but the moment that practice infringes on another person's life, it is no longer our freedom, but our responsibility to prevent discrimination and harm.

SB4 could allow law enforcement to refuse to protect your mosque, your church, or your synagogue because of their religious belief. SB4 could allow a doctor or hospital to refuse to provide life saving treatments to women who are miscarrying, because of their religious beliefs. SB4 could allow school counselors to refuse to help an LGBT teen in crisis. SB4 could allow any of us, any of our loved ones, any of our neighbors to be discriminated against because of anything.

I love Michigan, I came here from California because my mom got a job here. And 21 years ago as an eight year old, I was angry with her for moving me to the mitten state. I swore I would move back to California as soon as I was 18. Well, then I went to Western Michigan University, and then I fell in love with Kalamazoo. Last summer I even, finally made my way up to the UP. The point is, I love this state and so do many other Michiganders and Michigan transplants. This is a state where over 70% of residents support the extension of ELCRA to LGBT residents. This is a state where over 70% of residents believe same sex parents should have the same right to adoption as heterosexual parents. Michigan is a state that believes in equality and fairness, where fairness and equality are strong core values.

SB4 does not reflect the greatness that is Michigan, that Michigan deserves. We can do better than this, better for every resident. Let's protect Michigan families, Michigan children, and all Michiganders. Oppose SB4.

Sincerely,

Jay Maddock